

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 AID-05 EB-08 TRSE-00
OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 /098 W
-----084843 121727Z /64

R 120335Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1355
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
AMCONSUL MEDAN
AMCONSUL SURABAYA

C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 12293

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, ID
SUBJECT: ARSENIO HORTA'S VIEWS ON THE CURRENT STATUS OF FRETELIN
IN EAST TIMOR

REF: JAKARTA 12189 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: ARSENIO HORTA, YOUNGER BROTHER OF THE FRETELIN FORMER
"FOREIGN MINISTER" AND CURRENT "UN REP" JOSE RAMOS HORTA,
TOLD THE AMBASSADOR AND SEVERAL OTHER CHIEFS OF MISSION WHO
VISITED EAST TIMOR ON SEPTEMBER 8 THAT HE BELIEVES FRETELIN IS
NO LONGER FUNCTIONING AS AN EFFECTIVE COORDINATED, POLITICAL
OR MILITARY FORCE AND THAT IT HAS LOST THE SUPPORT OF
THE BULK OF THE POPULATION. HE BELIEVES THE REMAINING
FRETELIN MEMBERS WILL EVENTUALLY SURRENDER. HORTA,
ORIGINALLY A UDT SUPPORTER WHO WAS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY
THREE TIMES BY FRETELIN (ALLEGEDLY FOR ATTEMPTING TO
DEFECT TO THE INDONESIAN SIDE), SAID FRETELIN GUARDS
FREQUENTLY BEAT PRISONERS AND KILLED OR TORTURED
CIVILIANS WHO REFUSED TO COOPERATE WITH THEM. INDONESIANS
WERE PRESENT AND SOME OF HIS REMARKS MAY HAVE BEEN
SLANTED. NONETHELESS, THE AMBASSADORS PRESENT FOUND
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HIM GENERALLY SINCERE AND CREDIBLE. END SUMMARY.

2. ARSENIO HORTA, 27-YEAR OLD BROTHER OF JOSE RAMOS HORTA,
WAS PICKED UP BY EAST TIMORESE PARAMILITARY FORCES ON
AUGUST 30 DURING HIS THIRD PERIOD OF INCARCERATION BY
FRETELIN. AN ARTICULATE AND RELATIVELY WELL EDUCATED
EAST TIMORESE, HORTA WORKED FOR SEVERAL YEARS WITH

DUNLOP TIRE IN AUSTRALIA. HE RETURNED TO EAST TIMOR IN MID-1975, ACCORDING TO HIS ACCOUNT, TO VISIT RELATIVES. HOWEVER, HE PARTICIPATED ACTIVELY IN THE UDT GROUP. FOR THIS HE WAS IMPRISONED IN DILI IN SEPTEMBER 1975. ON DECEMBER 7, HE WAS TAKEN TO THE MOUNTAINS WHEN FRETILIN LEFT DILI AND PUT TO WORK MONITORING ENGLISH LANGUAGE RADIO BROADCASTS, ESPECIALLY FROM AUSTRALIA. (NOTE: THE LOCAL MILITARY COMMANDER SAID HE ACTUALLY RAN BROADCASTS OVER THE FRETILIN CLANDESTINE PROPAGANDA STATION "RADIO MAUBERE".) AFTER NINE MONTHS HE WAS RELEASED BY FRETILIN AND PERMITTED TO REJOIN HIS MOTHER IN A SMALL HAMLET IN KECAMATAN BARIQUE IN A SWAMPY REGION ALONG THE SOUTH COAST. THIS AREA, HE SAID, WAS OUTSIDE FRETILIN CONTROL IN A SORT OF "NO MAN'S LAND".

3. IN MAY 1977, FRETILIN TOOK HIM INTO CUSTODY FOR A SECOND TIME, PROBABLY BECAUSE THEY LEARNED HE WAS TRYING TO GET TO VIQUEQUE TO JOIN THE INDONESIANS. HE WAS PUT IN A "HOLE" IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT FOR FOUR DAYS, BEATEN AND DETAINED FOR A TOTAL OF 83 DAYS. HE WAS FINALLY RELEASED IN JULY 1977. THE GROUP HE WAS WITH INCLUDED 22 FRETILIN ARMED GUARDS AND 30 TO 40 PRISONERS. THEY MOVED FREQUENTLY. THE OTHER PRISONERS WERE OFTEN BEATEN BUT, DESPITE OCCASIONAL ABUSE, HE BELIEVES HE RECEIVED PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT BECAUSE OF HIS BROTHER'S POSITION. AFTER THREE MONTHS DETENTION, HE WAS RELEASED TO RETURN TO WORK IN THE CONFIDENTIAL

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RICE FIELDS IN THE BARIQUE REGION.

4. HORTA WAS TAKEN INTO CUSTODY AGAIN IN JULY 1978, "BECAUSE MY MOTHER TALKED TOO MUCH" (IDLE GOSSIP APPARENTLY TIPPED OFF FRETILIN THAT HE WAS VISITING HIS BROTHER IN A NEARBY HAMLET AND WAS ON THE MOVE AGAIN). HE WAS IMPRISONED IN THE AREA OF LAKLUTA. THE FRETILIN GUARDS HERE, HE SAID, WERE PARTICULARLY RUTHLESS. THEY MUTILATED EAST TIMORESE SUSPECTED OF COLLABORATING WITH THE INDONESIANS. HE SAW A WOMAN TORTURED AND KILLED. HE ALSO SAW FRETILIN MEMBERS KILL VILLAGE "WIZARDS" (TRIBAL MEDICINE MEN) WHO OPPOSED FRETILIN. HIS GROUP ORIGINALLY INCLUDED 120 PRISONERS AND 17 GUARDS. THEY STARTED MOVING FROM LAKLUTA ON AUGUST 15 BECAUSE OF SHORTAGE OF FOOD. AT LEAST 14 PEOPLE DIED OR WERE KILLED DURING THE TWO WEEK TRIP. ON AUGUST 30, WHILE CAMPING ALONG THE RIVER DILOR NEAR WAYMURY, THEY ENCOUNTERED AN EAST TIMORESE PARAMILITARY PATROL. THE LEADING FRETILIN GUARD DROPPED HIS GUN AND FLED, AND IN THE RESULTING CONFUSION ABOUT 20 PRISONERS, INCLUDING HORTA, ESCAPED AND JOINED THE GOVERNMENT FORCES. HE IS NOW LIVING IN DILI WITH A MARRIED SISTER. HE HAS LOST CONTACT WITH HIS MOTHER WHO WAS ALSO TAKEN INTO CUSTODY IN JULY 1978.

5. ASKED FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF FRETILIN'S POSITION AND PROSPECTS, HORTA SAID HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THE ORGANIZATION CONTROLS ANY SUBSTANTIAL AREA OR ELEMENT OF THE POPULATION. IT HAS DISINTEGRATED INTO SMALL GROUPS WHICH ARE CONSTANTLY ON THE MOVE IN SEARCH OF FOOD. THEY ARE ALSO SHORT OF MEDICINES, AMMUNITION AND CLOTHING. HE BELIEVES THE REMAINING HARD CORE MEMBERS OF FRETILIN ARE AFRAID TO GIVE UP BUT, GIVEN THE DIFFICULT CONDITIONS IN THE MOUNTAINS, PREDICTED THAT THEY WILL EVENTUALLY SURRENDER. HE MAY WELL HAVE TAILORED HIS STORY FOR OUR CONSUMPTION BUT THE CONSENSUS OF THOSE WHO MET HORTA IN DILI IS THAT HIS ASSESSMENTS ARE CREDIBLE AND GENERALLY CONSISTENT WITH OTHER AVAILABLE INFORMATION, ALTHOUGH FOR PERSONAL REASONS HE
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IS PROBABLY GLOSSING OVER CERTAIN ITEMS IN HIS OWN PAST.
MASTERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, FRETILIN
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 sep 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978JAKARTA12293
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780370-1004
Format: TEL
From: JAKARTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780978/aaaacmcs.tel
Line Count: 138
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 86e15b52-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 JAKARTA 12189
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1471755
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ARSENIO HORTA\ S VIEWS ON THE CURRENT STATUS OF FRETILIN IN EAST TIMOR
TAGS: PEPR, ID, (HORTA, ARSENIO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/86e15b52-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014